



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: Meghan Wedd McGuire
(804) 786-9048

COMMISSIONER REINHARD STATEMENT ON GOVERNOR KAINE'S BUDGET

Richmond, VA – The Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services issued the following statement today from Commissioner James Reinhard, M.D. following the release of Governor Kaine's budget:

"2007 has been a difficult year for Virginia on issues related to mental health. Much attention has been focused on our public mental health system as a result of tragic events this year, most notably at Virginia Tech. Not acting now to help fix a fragmented system would also be tragic.

"Recent reports, including from the Virginia Tech Review Panel, tell us that insufficient resources led to gaps in the system, particularly for crisis intervention, outpatient services and case management. There are dedicated people throughout the Commonwealth working hard with limited resources to provide excellent services for individuals with mental illness. Yet, simply put, we do not have enough services to meet the demand.

"Governor Kaine's budget reflects his priority to help repair Virginia's long under-funded public mental health system. His plan includes strengthening the core services of the Commonwealth's 40 local community services boards for emergency services and case management, and expanding outpatient service capacity. He will also seek to clarify expectations of the community services boards to provide a more uniform array of core services across the Commonwealth.

"Also, the issues that the Commission on Mental Health Law Reform has been confronting for over a year related to civil commitment will be examined in great detail this legislative session. While individuals' need for treatment must be addressed, it is critically important that changes to the Commonwealth's civil commitment procedure balance the need for public safety with the rights of individuals with mental illness, who overall are overwhelmingly more likely to be victims than perpetrators of violence.

"I am very pleased with the Governor's budget. We look forward to working with the Governor, the General Assembly and our many partners during the 2008 Legislative Session to ensure the best possible outcomes for Virginians with intellectual disabilities and behavioral health disorders and for their families."

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Available to citizens statewide, Virginia's public mental health, mental retardation and substance abuse services system is comprised of 40 community services boards (CSBs) and 16 state facilities. DMHMRSAS seeks to promote dignity, choice, recovery, and the highest possible level of participation in work, relationships, and all aspects of community life for these individuals with mental health, mental retardation or substance abuse disorders.